An Essay.

on

Epidemic Dysentery.

Respectfully Submitted to the

Faculty of the

Homoropathic Medical College.

of Pennsylvania.

in the year

One thousand eight hundred and

fifty two

By James D. Bratt.

of Pittsburgh

Pennsylvania

Epidemic Dysentery.

This disease is one the practitioner is very frequently called upon to treat: its painful and dangerous character, forces itself upon the attention of the physician, and he must understand it thoroughly, in order to prescribe successfully. Medical writers have written largly upon the cause and cure of dysentery, all of which seemed very plausible until proved by practice to be false: like all other theories not founded upon fixed laws and principles.

Since the introduction of the Homeopathic theory, the disease has been successfully treated by those who adhered to it. The law "similia similibus curantur" being one of Nature's fixed laws, the physician has a sure guide to the treatment of disease: hence the success.

So much has been written upon this subject, that we do not expect to offer anything new upon the cause or treatment for we have not had sufficient experience, but simply to give an account of its appearance and treatment, both last summer and this, in the district in which we resided.

Dysentery is an inflamation of the colon and rectum, characterised by small mucus or bloody evacuations, griping pains in the abdomen, ~~straining at stool~~, and tenesmus. It is often called Colitis. Fluxus dysentericus. Flux. Bloody flux &c—.

Some of the characteristic symptoms, are, want of appetite; nausea: thirst: dry skin: constipation or diarrhea: flatulency: febrile symptoms before the general symptoms are developed. Sometimes the first indications are tenesmus and bloody stools with

mucus: stools of a peculiar and often cadaverous smell. Sometimes the disease begins with slight diarrhea, some griping pains and colic: Sensation of burning in the abdomen: white jelly like mucus discharges —

This disease is generally worse at night, and continues so until near morning, when the patient feels some better: during the exacerbations, the fever rises and there is increased heat and thirst. The patient has to rise to stool from every five minutes to one and four hours.

The causes of dysentery are various. It has been ascribed to wet and cold: to the agency of malaria: to the use of bad food, and to contagion. It generally prevails in our country from august until October: when the days are hot and the night cool. We often see cases through the winter.

It is supposed the disease is increased by the putrid eminations from decayed matter arising in the fall: In the low marshy damp regions where there is intermittant fever, the disease is more prevalent. Persons exposed to much fatigue and out door work: soldiers marching in the field all day, camping at night in the open air, and under every variety of wrather: scantily provided with food and clothing, and often addicted to intemperate habits. In the late war with Mexico, we had a good demonstration of this fact: thousands of our soldiers died of dysentery from these causes.

In our country the disease generally assumes a mild form and occurs in the fall and winter months. Some writers think this disease in its epidemic form has some connection with the cholera. After the scourge of 1830 and 32 the dysentery was very prevalent over the country

and in a very severe type: since the attack of 1848/49 it has been very prevalent. In the north-western part of Virginia, Eastern and Southern part of Ohio and the north western part of Pennsylvania the disease prevailed to a very great extent, and attacked districts, that before were healthy.

It is supposed to arise from the putrid emanations arising from the stools of dysenteric patients, and soon spreads rapidly over a large tract of country. Two summers ago, a drover had been East with a stock of horses: on his returning home was attacked with dysentery: he stopped at Brookville, Jefferson Co Penna. He was treated by an allopathic physician, but died: the persons who waited upon him, were attacked and died, and others who went to visit and attend them were also attacked, some recovered and

others died. The disease in a short time spread over the county and to the adjoining counties of Clarion and Armstrong. In the short space of two months, more than three hundred persons died from this disease. People became very much alarmed, the disease appeared to be so general and fatal. The news papers in giving an account of the deaths which occurd in the district, said, "the same number of deaths were never known to occur, in so short a time; and medical aid was powerless. (meaning allopathic)

Before last summer the disease was scarcely ever known, in these places, and they were always considered very healthy. dry counties - From the observations of the course of dysentery, two summers, we were led to believe it was epidemic - Fear is another exciting cause; we have seen several cases

we have every reason to believe this was the exciting cause.

Having said this much upon the causes of dysentery, we will now proceed to the next part of our subject, the pathological condition. In post mortem examinations of persons that have died of this disease in the acute form, we find great inflammation of the intestines, particularly the colon and rectum. This inflammation gives rise to constant pain, fever and to great discharge of blood and mucus.

Not having had an opportunity to examine after death, persons that have died of this disease I cannot give the pathological condition from observation. I take the liberty of making a short extract from Watsons "Theory and Practice" page 819.

In ordinary cases of dysentery the morbid

appearances after death, are inflammation and thickening of the mucus membrane of the colon and rectum; occasionally mortification and sloughing: but more generally in protracted cases deep and extensive ulcerations of the follicles of the large intestines. The glands of the mesocolon and mesentery are often enlarged and sometimes inflamed, and more rarely in a state of inflammation: the corresponding portion of the intestine being occasionally the seat of a deep and extensive ulcer."

"The omentum occasionally adheres to these diseased glands, forming a band, by which a portion of the intestine may become strangulated, and cause death. "The ulcerations of the large intestines, are commonly most numerous and extensive, in the cecum, and upper portion of the colon. The ileo caecal has in some instances been found entirely

destroyed by ulceration". In some cases we can often trace the course of the colon by making percussion upon the abdomen.

The prognosis varies according to the type the disease assumes. In slight cases, the pains become less severe, tenesmus diminishes, and the stools assume a fecal or bilious character. Should typoid symptoms appear, coldness of the extremities, cool clammy skin, involuntary stools, cessation of tenesmus, rapid sinking of strength, and stupor, the prognosis is very unfavorable. The longer the disease continues the greater the danger. Under Allopathic treatment the disease is very doubtful: a patient scarcely ever recovers short of two or three weeks. With Homeopathic remidies the disease should begin to abate in three or four days. The Homeopath has very little difficulty in curing this disease, when called in time.

We design~~x~~ giving a short account of the Alleopathic treatment of dysentery, that came under our observation, this and last summer. In the acute form, the doctors bled freely and applied blisters; following this with calomel, opium, morphine, castor oil, and Epsom salts. In a great many cases nothing but calomel and castor oil was given. In slight cases, they gave a mixture composed of chalk, laudanum and water, which acted as an astringent for a short time, but the disease would break out again with renewed force.

This composed the whole course of treatment, and was scarcely ever varied: for when they departed from the prescribed course, they wandered in an unknown tract. Having no guide except the books, and in these cases the prescribed treatment would fail, they knew not what to do.

This round of treatment having been administered, if it did not kill the patient at once, would leave him in such a condition that would take weeks to recover. Those patients who were so fortunate as to have strong constitutions, and able to stand the disease, and the treatment which was worse than the disease, recovered: those who could not died, and their friends were consoled the assurance, that every thing had been done, that could be done".

The people became so alarmed at the fatality of the disease, and the poor success of the treatment of the doctors, that they would rather trust to their own domestic remedies than employ them. All the "root and yarb teas" that any and every old woman could think or hear of.

were brought into requisition: and upon an average had much better success than the allopathic doctors.

We will now pass on to the Homeopathic treatment of dysentery. The remedies most used in the treatment of this disease are Acon. Aloes. Ars. Bellad. Bary Mur. Cham. Canth. Carbo veg. China. Capsicum - Colchic - Dulc. Ipec Hepar Sulph - Nux vom - Merc cor - sol - viv - Nitric acid. Opium - Rhus Tox - Staph - Sulph - Sulph Acid. Verat, &c.

The use of Acon is indicated when febrile symptoms assume a synochial form.

Bellad - Patients of a plethoric condition: face red: head hot: great desire for cold drinks: tongue white: no appetite: colic: burning and spasmodic pain in the abdomen, with small discharges of bloody mucus.

China - If the disease has been occasioned by marshy emanations, and the fever assumes an intermittent type.

Colocynthis - Cramp like colics in the lower abdomen: green watery stools: tongue white: bitter taste in mouth: great desire for cold drinks -

Colchicum. Bilious vomiting: discharges of white mucus: spasms of the sphincter ani: perspiration at the commencement of the disease which is afterwards checked: pulse frequent and very small -

Cauth. discharges of flocculent mucus, looking like scrapings of the bowels: burning pains in the abdomen and anus -

Carbo veg - Cutting burning pains from the back to the bladder: anxiety: tremulous weakness: pain round the umbilicus

Merc Corr. This remedy is almost specific in this disease. Some of its indications are Skin dry and hot: tongue dry and dirty: pulse frequent: evacuations of pure blood or bloody mucus, bilious and fœtid: sharp cutting pains in the abdomen: tenesmus: desire to remain long at stool: intense thirst: pain in the neck of the bladder when urinating: aggravation of the symptoms at night.

Merc Vol. Is adapted more to those cases in which the upper portion of the intestines are affected: The symptoms are similar to Merc Corr. Offensive breath: yellowish color of the skin: evacuation of fœtid mucus, bilious matter of a green or dark color. Prolapsus of the rectum: frequent desire to urinate: frequent desire to evacuate the bowels: violent tenesmus: small discharges: rapid sinking of strength: aggravation at night.

Cham- Tongue foul: bad taste: diarrhoea:
is more adapted to women and children.
Dulc- Bloody discharges: burning and itching
in the rectum: for dysentery arising from
cold.
Nitric Acid. Frequent urging to stool; without
having an evacuation: thirst: fever: typoid
symptoms.
Plumbum. When the patient discharges nothing
but pure blood: violent fever: severe cutting
pains in the abdomen and stomach: burning
in the anus during an evacuation.
Epidemic dysentery often assumes
a putrid character. When the season is hot
and dry, it is very severe and fatal. At
first it has an inflammatory character: stools
more frequent with violent colic. When it
has progressed still further the symptoms
are, great prostration of strength: hot burning

skin: urine turbid and flocculent: discharges of decayed fœtid masses: vomiting of bile or mucus: putrid taste and smell: sunken expression of countenance.

The remedies adapted to this form of the disease are Ars. Carbo Veg. Rhus Tox Staph. Sulph. Sulph acid. Rt Sol.

Ars Iw. Evacuations watery and brown: loss of appetite: great weakness: aggravation from eating or drinking: rapid sinking of strength ulceration of the bowels: cold extremities: pulse small and thready: sensation of burning in the abdomen and stomach: burning pain in the anus at each evacuation: retention of urine: pain increased on motion.

Rhus Tox. Constant tenesmus: stools mixed with blood: involuntary stools: violent colic at night: burning in the abdomen: thirst: loss of appetite: putrid slimy taste in the

mouth: coldness of the extremities.
Sulph. When other remedies fail: when
latent disease is arroused: violent tenesmus:
tongue dark and red: no thirst: distaste
of all food: burning in the rectum: stools
of blood and mucus.

Other remedies must be used
when the symptoms indicate their use. We
have given some of the most prominent
remedies with their symptoms. It would be
out of place here to give all the symptoms of
each remedy.

Diet. In light cases without fever, bread
rice, stale bread, crackers &c may be allowed.
In febrile cases the diet must be exclus-
ively mucilaginous or farinaceous drinks: preparations
of arrow root, rice, sago, tapioca &c. cold water
should be used very sparingly: if taken in too
large quantities, it aggravates the abdominal pains.

The patient should be kept as quiet as possible, and not allowed to move, except rising to stool: In convalescence, the patient, as a general rule should be confined to milk, butter and bread, and other farinacious substances, until recovery is confirmed. Relapses are apt to follow improper indulgence. In epidemic dysentery, the greatest care should be taken to keep the person of the patient, and the bed cloths clean: to remove all excrementitious matters: to ventilate the apartment, and preserve the air as sweet and pure as possible. Every thing that tends to excite or annoy the patient should be forbidden —

We have now given the Allopathic, and Homœopathic treatment of dysentery, as far as came under our observation. The result of the two systems has is all cases, where impartiality was shown to be in favor of Homœopathy —

Homoeopathy had never been heard of, (ie Clarion Clarion Co. Pa.) and those who trusted it knew nothing of its merits until a trial was made. Under adverse circumstances, the ridicule and influence of alleopathic doctors, and their friends: the prejudice and education of the community at large: every means professional and unprofessional, were used to prevent its introduction and progress. "Truth though often wronged will prevail in the end". Silently and slowly, it made a sure footing, dispensing its healing benefits, to all those who would accept them.

The success of the Homoeopathic treatment was such, that even its most bitter enemies, were compelled to acknowledge there must be some efficacy in the small doses. The success of the Homoeopathic treatment in cholera and dysentery has given it an impetus that cannot be resisted. In every country where these diseases

have been treated with Homœopathic remedies, the success has been invariably the same. The truth of Homœopathic law of cure is fully established: every year brings new facts to the already large stock obtained. Pure homeopathy will support all those who practice it: All that is ~~nessary~~ necapary now for the complete success of our system, is, the ~~consecentious~~ consientious and learned physician. Ever mindfull of the great law "similia Similibus curantur" the physician can visit the sick and afflicted, with the consciousness of having a science, that will not fail him when needed. The suffering patient will recive him with joy, confident he will shortly be relieved.

We have now closed this imperfectly prepared treatise, and our highest wish has been to reflect back the teachings of our justly distinguished

instructors. How far we have succeeded, is with diffidence, respectfully submitted for consideration.